Life Independent

Study Abroad Training

Douglas Perkins

2018–2025

As people grow up, they do more on their own, and they make more of their own choices. Are you more independent now than you were in junior high school? What things do you do now that you didn’t do then?

Independence Survey

For each activity or task, can you do it? If not, when do you want to learn to do it? These are all things that could be important if you're living own your own.

Appearance & Health

- Do the laundry.
- Keep yourself clean.
- Clean the kitchen & bathroom.
- Exercise regularly.
- Get up on time.

Food

- Cook healthy foods.
- Use a coffee machine.
- Properly wash dishes.
- Write a shopping list.
- Buy inexpensive foods.

Finance

- Read your cell phone bill.
- Pay your cell phone bill.
- Write a resume.
- Manage your own budget.
- Distinguish “luxuries” from “necessities”.

Education

- Sign up for classes.
- Go to school on time.
- Keep track of your projects and homework.
- Understand your report card and transcript.
- Discuss your career path with an advisor.

Other

The above list was quite short. What other skills do you have, or would you like to have, that would help you lead an independent life?

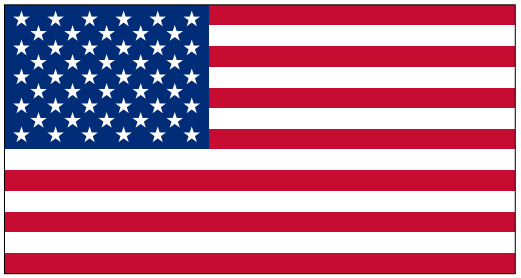
Surprising Stories

Sometimes you do something that feels normal to you, but other people react as though you did something strange. It could be a word, gesture, or action. The situation gets weird, but you don’t know why.

Let’s look at some real examples of American college students abroad. Can you guess what happened?

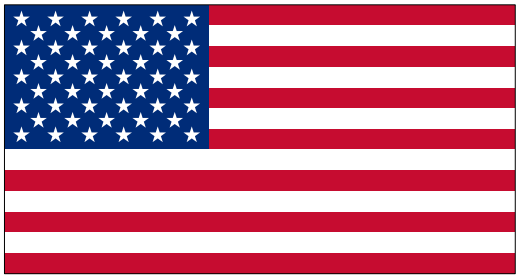
Created by Addicted04. CC BY-SA 3.0. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:USA_orthographic.svg

U.S.A. Incident



(Anthropology Professor) A student of mine asked me for help. She was driving one day, and slowed down at an intersection. The car behind her drove into her car. She spoke to the other driver and said she was sorry they were in that situation. A police officer came, got the information from both drivers, and wrote down that my student caused the accident. She was confused, because she didn’t do anything wrong.

U.S.A. Explained



(Anthropology Professor) After the accident, my student said that she was “sorry”. In the United States, saying you’re sorry means that you caused the accident, so the police officer thought it was her fault. However, my student was a Japanese woman living in the U.S., so this isn’t what she meant. Later, I went to court and explained this to the judge.

Created by Viveksharma474. CC BY-SA 3.0. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:India_(orthographic_projection)-2.svg

India Incident

(Female, 20 years old) Three weeks after I arrived in India, I was invited for dinner at a relative's house. Some Tibetan monks were invited, too. I had an exam the next day, so I brought my textbook and studied during the party. When dinner was served, I placed my textbook at my side near my feet. The monks stared at me in shock. Suddenly they emotionally addressed the group in Tibetan. It was obvious they were both angry and frustrated.

Adapted from What's Up with Culture from the School for International Studies at University of the Pacific.

India Explained

(Female, 20 years old) It seems I did many things wrong! First, I was writing in my textbook. However, my textbook was actually a religious book, so the monks didn’t like that. To make things worse, I put the book next to my feet. In India and Tibet, the foot is considered the dirtiest part of the human body. It is incredibly rude to place a sacred book near your feet, and that had angered the monks.

Adapted from What's Up with Culture from the School for International Studies at University of the Pacific.

If you live abroad long enough, you’re going to have an experience like one of these. It could be dramatic or uncomfortable, but with clear communication, eventually you’ll figure out what’s going on. Remember to share your stories with friends later.

Independence Reading

Do you often help your friends? How?

(Janelle) I have always felt responsible for making sure that my friends were happy. When my friends are happy, it makes me feel happy too. I often like to help my friends with any problems that they have. For example, if a friend was lost, I would go find them and help them make their way back to their house or would I ring to arrange someone else to help. When I was in high school, I would help my friends with their English work. It was satisfying watching them begin to understand the work we were doing. I enjoy helping other people and seeing them feel successful.

If or when you go to university, do you want to live at home? Alone? With roommates?

(Amber) When I go to university to study for my master's degree, I will be living at home! By living at home, I can have a more flexible schedule and study whenever I like! I can also have a part-time job so I can earn money. By living at home, I won't have to spend money on things like rent or electricity, so I can save a lot whilst I'm at home.

If you could work a part-time job, where would you work?

(Doug) I want to work part-time in a national park. Nature is wonderful, and if I could work and live in a beautiful area and spend a lot of time outdoors, I would feel much less stress. Big cities have great opportunities, such as fascinating jobs, the music scene, and all the shopping you could want, but there's a kind of perfection and serenity to be found in the wild outdoors. Edward Abbey once wrote, "This is the most beautiful place on earth."

When you have to make important decisions, who do you usually ask for advice?

(Geff) I usually ask for advice from my best friend. What I like that most about her is that she doesn't have biased opinions just because I'm her friend. She would tell me honestly if she thinks I did something wrong, and also support me if she knows what I did was right. We've been friends for more than 11 years and we've never had serious disagreements, simply because we communicate our honest emotions well. After all these years, she feels more like a sister to me than a best friend.

Independence Writing

Answer 4+ questions.

1. How do you help out around the house?
2. Do you often help your friends? How?
3. Do you study better alone or in a group?
4. If or when you go to university, do you want to live at home? Alone? With roommates?
5. If you could work a part-time job, where would you work?
6. When you make important decisions, who do you ask for advice?
7. If you are an older sibling, do you feel you had to grow up faster than others? If you are a younger sibling, did you get babied for longer than others?

See Also

- Independence in London – Marjorie Carlson https://youtu.be/Dc8ZFx_hwaE